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Via e-Mail

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC

RE: Petition for Rule Making RM-11699

Gentlemen:

I oppose approval of the Petition for Rule Making RM-11699 expanding the use of encryption on the amateur radio bands not including the current exceptions for a Space telecommand station, and telecommand of model craft, §§ 97.211 & 97.215 respectively.

Encryption reduces the number of stations available in an emergency. Without the code key other stations cannot relay messages. The pool of available operators is reduced when needed most.

Encryption prevents self policing. Its impossible to tell if an encrypted message is legitimate emergency traffic, or a prohibited communication such as child pornography.

EMS message are usually not encrypted. Messages such as “a 30 year old female with a fractured femur and six months pregnant is inbound” doesn't violate patient privacy. Veterans Administration Hospitals use the first letter of the patient's last name and the last four digits of their social security number to identify them. A message that D1234 needs a certain medication does not compromise privacy. During the Boston Marathon bombings amateurs passed medically related messages without encryption.

If logistics information requires encryption for the safety of a shipment a police escort will probably be needed to prevent hijacking. Served agencies have mechanisms in place to send lists of sheltered people. An amateur can volunteer to use the served agency's equipment and frequencies to pass sensitive messages.

National security information that cannot be passed in the clear should be sent via the police or agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security.

Sincerely,

Lew Wallach, N9WL